

sites of the September 11 attack: the World Trade Center in New York; the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia; and the Flight 93 Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of this horrific act of terrorism, this bill would honor the memory of the nearly 3,000 Americans who lost their lives and would serve as a lasting reminder of the heroism and perseverance of our Nation's first responders.

I thank Representative CONNOLLY for introducing this important legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1445

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this year, as the gentlewoman pointed out, marks the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11. While almost two decades have passed since that tragic day, we will never forget the thousands of innocent people who lost their lives and the brave first responders who put their lives on the line in our country's time of need.

Memorials have been established nationwide to honor the victims and first responders who were killed in the attacks, including the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Virginia, the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York.

H.R. 2278, offered by Congressman CONNOLLY, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to designate a memorial trail, approximately 1,300 miles in length, to link the three existing September 11 memorials in Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania. The tour route will intersect Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., and will be administered by the National Park Service.

This bill will help preserve the memory of the 2,977 innocent people who lost their lives on 9/11 and ensure that we never forget the horrors of that fateful day. I hope it also serves as some solace to the families of the victims, who can use this trail to remember and honor their lost loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY), the author of this important piece of legislation.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend, Congresswoman DINGELL, for her support, and the distinguished ranking member, the Republican manager, for his support.

In a troubled time, when we seem like we can't get together, here is an opportunity to come together, as we did 20 years ago on September 11.

I rise in support of H.R. 2278, designating the September 11th National

Memorial Trail Route, a 1,300-mile system of trails and roadways that connect all three sites attacked on September 11, 2001: The World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon here in Washington, D.C., and the Flight 93 Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

As our Nation prepares for the 20th anniversary of September 11, we have an opportunity to create a lasting legacy connecting all three sites.

The trail provides trail-goers with a chance to reflect and learn about our Nation's resilience and perseverance following that dreadful day.

In addition to the three 9/11 memorials anchoring this route, travelers can learn about our founding with stops at Valley Forge National Historical Park and Independence Hall in Philadelphia or visit the Antietam National Battlefield or the Gettysburg National Military Park to remember some of the other darkest days in our Nation's history.

This trail route connects travelers with these points in our history and majestic landscapes, while driving further tourism and recreation along its route.

It starts at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington and extends northwest to the Shanksville site in Pennsylvania. It continues east to New York City's National September 11 Memorial & Museum. It then heads south, following the East Coast Greenway, connecting to the Garden of Reflection 9/11 Memorial. It then connects to the National Mall here in Washington, D.C., and ultimately returns to the Pentagon Memorial, remembering that dreadful incident at the Pentagon that cost so many lives.

It extends through six States and the District of Columbia. It is a multiuse trail, with more than 50 percent of the route off road. The idea for the trail was born in the wake of September 11 at the Mid-Atlantic Governors Conference on Greenways, Blueways, and Green Infrastructure.

Conference chair and then-director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, David Brickley, presented the vision for a trail route connecting the Pentagon and the site of Flight 93 and the Twin Towers in New York City. David founded the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance in the following year to develop the September 11th National Memorial Trail.

This route would be administered by the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the affected landowners but would not be considered as a unit of the National Park System or as part of the National Trail System.

The Secretary would be authorized to produce and disseminate educational materials and create an official symbol or trail marker to mark the trail routes.

The bill authorizes the Secretary to enter into agreements with and provide technical and financial assistance to

other Federal agencies, States, localities, and private entities, as may be required.

Designating the September 11th National Memorial Trail route will serve as a natural embodiment of our pledge to never forget the heroes and the victims of that terrible day.

It honors the memories of nearly 3,000 family members and loved ones we lost on that day, and it is a tribute to the bravery of the heroes that responded.

When I was a local board of supervisors member, I was in a fire station, Fire Station 30, and I saw firsthand those first responders who went to the Pentagon to try to save lives, putting their own lives at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this bill gives anyone touched by the tragedy of 9/11 an opportunity for reflection, comfort, and healing. It is also a moment for us to come together once again to remember the heroes and the victims of that day, to honor them, and to come together as Republicans and Democrats in that pursuit.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2278, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

FREE VETERANS FROM FEES ACT

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1029) to Waive the application fee for any special use permit for veterans' special events at war memorials on land administered by the National Park Service in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1029

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Free Veterans from Fees Act".

SEC. 2. WAIVER OF SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION FEE FOR VETERANS' SPECIAL EVENTS.

(a) WAIVER.—The application fee for any special use permit solely for a veterans' special event at war memorials on land administered by the National Park Service in the

District of Columbia and its environs shall be waived.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND ITS ENVIRONS.—The term “the District of Columbia and its environs” has the meaning given that term in section 8902(a) of title 40, United States Code.

(2) GOLD STAR FAMILIES.—The term “Gold Star Families” includes any individual described in section 3.2 of Department of Defense Instruction 1348.36.

(3) SPECIAL EVENT.—The term “special events” has the meaning given that term in section 7.96 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations.

(4) VETERAN.—The term “veteran” has the meaning given that term in section 101(2) of title 38, United States Code.

(5) VETERANS’ SPECIAL EVENT.—The term “veterans’ special event” means a special event of which the majority of attendees are veterans or Gold Star Families.

(6) WAR MEMORIAL.—The term “war memorial” means any memorial or monument which has been erected or dedicated to commemorate a military unit, military group, war, conflict, victory, or peace.

(c) APPLICABILITY.—This section shall apply to any special use permit application submitted after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) APPLICABILITY OF EXISTING LAWS.—Permit applicants remain subject to all other laws, regulations, and policies regarding the application, issuance and execution of special use permits for a veterans’ special event at war memorials on land administered by the National Park Service in the District of Columbia and its environs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1029, the Free Veterans from Fees Act, introduced by my colleague, Representative GREG STEUBE.

This bill would honor the sacrifices made by our veterans and Gold Star families by waiving application fees for veterans’ special events at war memorials on land administered by the National Park Service in our Nation’s Capital.

Although the National Park Service has a longstanding practice of waiving application fees for special use permits for most veterans’ events at war memorials, veterans’ organizations have often had to pay administrative fees and associated costs to obtain permits for events, such as honor buses.

By codifying a version of this practice in law, we can ensure that vet-

erans and the Gold Star families are not required to pay when visiting the national war memorials that were built to commemorate their bravery and sacrifices and our country’s fallen heroes.

I would like to thank Representative STEUBE for introducing this important legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1029, offered by Congressman STEUBE of Florida, would waive the application fee associated with special use permits for any veterans’ demonstrations or special events at war memorials located on Federal land.

Each year, hundreds of veterans’ groups and Gold Star families visit our national war memorials in Washington, D.C. This is done through arranged visits sponsored by veterans’ organizations. To obtain a permit for any special events they hold, these veterans’ groups may be required to pay administrative fees and other processing costs to the National Park Service. The Free Veterans from Fees Act waives these special use permit fees for veterans’ groups so that they may hold their demonstrations and special events at war memorials administered by the National Park Service in the District of Columbia free of charge.

The last thing veterans and their families should worry about is paying administrative fees when visiting memorials and monuments built in their honor. These brave men and women fought to defend our Nation, and we should honor their sacrifices by making it as simple as possible for them to visit these sites.

I commend Congressman STEUBE for his work on this bill, I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Michigan for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I was an original cosponsor with my good friend and colleague, Mr. STEUBE from Florida, of H.R. 1029, the Free Veterans from Fees Act.

H.R. 1029 would waive application fees for special use permits for Honor Flights and Gold Star Family events and other veterans demonstrations and special events at our Nation’s war memorials. It is the right thing to do, to try to reduce the cost for a lot of these important commemorative occasions happening right here in our Nation’s Capital.

Throughout the years, I have had the privilege of being able to attend many of the Freedom Honor Flights that emanated from my hometown in La Crosse, Wisconsin. They are joyous occasions, with much celebration hon-

oring the service and sacrifice of our veterans, celebrating their achievements, but more importantly, allowing them, many for the very last time, to be able to hop on a plane, come to Washington, and pay their respects at the memorials of conflicts that they were involved in and for the fallen comrades who didn’t come home.

Oftentimes, on the way home—I know this is true for our La Crosse Honor Flights—there is a mail call where the relatives of these veterans, family members, write letters of thanks to them as they are coming home. When they arrive, it is a huge celebration of music and thanking them for their service and sacrifice. It is a great thing to behold.

The thought that the cost of this is compounded with unnecessary application fees in order to attend these events at our war memorials is something we can rectify, and that is exactly what we are doing under H.R. 1029, along with Gold Star events that occur here and other veterans’ events.

I also am the original author of the Veterans History Project, trying to record our veterans’ stories before they pass away, archiving it at the Library of Congress, so that we never forget the service and sacrifice that came before us.

We are trying to capture many of these veterans coming to our Nation’s Capital—again, many for the very last time—to have them share their story of what it was like to serve our country during times of conflict and peace. So it has been a great avenue in order to reach out and expand the number of oral histories that we have collected at the Library of Congress, close to 120,000 veterans’ stories so far and counting.

So if this is a way for us to reduce cost, to ease the burden, to make it easier for veterans to come here, a chance for us to reach out to them, asking them to share their memories of what it was like to serve our Nation, then that is a good thing for us to do.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1029, and I thank my colleague from Florida (Mr. STEUBE) for partnering with me on this legislation.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill to honor our heroes and to say thank you in another way. I urge a “yes” vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1500

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, we have heard all the reasons why this bill matters. We even did an Honor Flight with the Rosies from Michigan, which was memorable.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1029.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

GREAT DISMAL SWAMP NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1154) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1154

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **HERITAGE AREA.**—The term "Heritage Area" means the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area.

(2) **SECRETARY.**—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) **STATES.**—The term "States" means the States of Virginia and North Carolina.

(4) **STUDY AREA.**—The term "study area" means—

(A) the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Suffolk in the State of Virginia;

(B) Isle of Wight County in the State of Virginia;

(C) Camden, Currituck, Gates, and Pasquotank counties in the State of North Carolina; and

(D) any other areas in the States that—

(i) have heritage aspects that are similar to the areas described in subparagraphs (A), (B), or (C); and

(ii) are adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, those areas.

SEC. 3. STUDY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, in consultation with State and local organizations and governmental agencies, Tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and other appropriate entities, shall conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a National Heritage Area, to be known as the "Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area".

(b) **REQUIREMENTS.**—The study shall include analysis, documentation, and determinations on whether the study area—

(1) has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that—

(A) represent distinctive aspects of the people and cultures of the United States;

(B) are worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use; and

(C) would be best managed—

(i) through partnerships among public and private entities; and

(ii) by linking diverse and sometimes non-contiguous resources and active communities;

(2) reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklore that are a valuable part of the story of the United States;

(3) provides outstanding opportunities—

(A) to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features; and

(B) for recreation and education;

(4) contains resources that—

(A) are important to any identified themes of the study area; and

(B) retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;

(5) includes residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and State, local, and Tribal governments, and other appropriate entities that—

(A) are involved in the planning of the Heritage Area;

(B) have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles of all participants in the Heritage Area, including the Federal Government; and

(C) have demonstrated support for the designation of the Heritage Area;

(6) has a potential management entity to work in partnership with the individuals and entities described in paragraph (5) to develop the Heritage Area while encouraging State and local economic activity; and

(7) has a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public.

SEC. 4. REPORT.

Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report that describes—

(1) the findings of the study under section 3; and

(2) any conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1154, the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act, introduced by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MCEACHIN), my Natural Resources Committee colleague.

This bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study assessing the suitability and the feasibility of designating the Great Dismal Swamp in the States of Virginia and North Carolina as a national heritage area.

The Great Dismal Swamp is an area of great historical, cultural, and environmental importance, and has been home to indigenous people since time immemorial. The swamp includes the ancestral lands of the Nansemond Indian Nation and the historic lands of the Haliwa-Saponi and Meherrin tribes.

The swamp was also one of the only known water-based stops on the Under-

ground Railroad and home to a thriving community descending from early colonial free people of color whose families resisted American slavery by finding refuge within the swamp.

In 1974 the swamp was designated as a national wildlife refuge due to its ecological significance, and today it holds the largest intact remnant of a vast forest that once covered more than a million acres.

Designating the Great Dismal Swamp as a national heritage area will help share the often untold stories of some of our Nation's underrepresented communities.

From the indigenous communities who first called the swamp home to the enslaved African Americans who endured the swamp's hardships in their fight for freedom, these are stories worth sharing with current and future generations.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Representative MCEACHIN, for championing this important legislation. I urge all my colleagues to support this bill. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 1154, offered by Congressman MCEACHIN, requires the Secretary of the Interior to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating a national heritage area comprised of cities and counties in Virginia and counties in North Carolina to be known as the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area.

While many think of Washington, D.C. as a great dismal swamp, it is actually a marshy region on the coastal plain of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina that stretches roughly 37 miles north to south and covers an area approximately 750 square miles. The Great Dismal Swamp has a long history of Native American inhabitants and was a known route and destination for freedom seekers.

This measure already passed the House as an amendment to H.R. 803, the Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act earlier this Congress. I did not support the measure then because it had not gone through regular order and was being added to a package that created 1.5 million acres of new wilderness. You could say this measure was bogged down here in the swamp.

While this is not how the process should work, I am happy that this bill has now gone through regular order, and I would, therefore, urge adoption of the measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. I am glad that my colleague's thoughts came through the swamp, and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.